

BELGAUM.

CHAPTER I. DESCRIPTION.

Belgaum, lying between 15° 23' and 16° 58' north latitude and 74° 5' and 75° 28' east longitude, has an area of about 4600 square miles, a population of about 864,000 or 185·57 to the square mile, and a realizable revenue of £124,100 (Rs. 12,41,000).¹

The district is separated from the west coast by a belt of land twenty-five to seventy-five miles broad. It is bounded on the north by the Miraj and Jath states; on the north-east by Bijápúr; on the east by the states of Jamkhandi and Mudhol; on the south-east by the state of Rámdurg and the Navalgund sub-division of Dhárwár; on the south by the Dhárwár sub-division of Dhárwár and the Supa sub-division of North Kánara; on the south-west by Goa; on the west by Sávantvádi and Kolhápúr; and on the north-west by Kolhápúr and Miraj. The lands of the district are greatly interlaced with those of the neighbouring native states. Within the limits of the district are large tracts of native territory, and many Belgaum villages are surrounded by native states. Of the tracts of native territory that lie within the limits of the district the chief are, in the north of Athni, two patches of Jath and Jamkhandi containing five villages; between Chikodi and Athni, Ráybág, a Kolhápúr sub-division with thirty-seven villages; in the west of Chikodi, Lát, a portion of Kolhápúr with eleven villages; and in the Belgaum sub-division two tracts of Sàngli and Kurundvád. Of the Belgaum villages which are surrounded by the lands of native states, there are some patches in Ráybág, within the limit of the district, and others in Jamkhandi, Miraj, and Kolhápúr outside of the district.

Chapter I. Description.

Boundaries.

Sub-Divisions.

For administrative purposes the area included in Belgaum is distributed over seven sub-divisions Athni in the north, Gokák in the east and centre, Parasgad Sampgaon and Khanápúr in the south, and Belgaum and Chikodi in the west. These sub-divisions have on an average an area of 665 square miles, 162 villages, and about 123,400 people:

¹ The population and revenue details are for 1881-82.

² As these native states are unsurveyed no area details are available. The number of villages has been roughly calculated from the district maps.

DISTRICTS.

Chapter I.

Description.

Sub-Divisions.

BELGAUM ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS, 1882.

SUB-DIVISION.	AREA.	VILLAGES										POPULATION, 1881.	TO THE SQUARE MILE.	LAND REVENUE, 1881-82.
		Government.				Alienated.			Total.					
		Villages.		Hamlets.		Villages.		Hamlets.	Government.	Alienated.	Total.			
		Inhabited.	Uninhabited.	Inhabited.	Uninhabited.	Inhabited.	Uninhabited.	Inhabited.						
Athni ...	786	64	1	16	4	17	...	11	65	17	82	105,961	134	£ 15,862
Chikodi ...	840	157	1	50	40	53	1	16	168	57	215	245,614	292	26,144
Gokak ...	670	80	5	33	11	34	1	8	85	35	120	93,029	198	13,144
Paragad ...	640	103	7	16	12	23	...	1	110	23	133	91,826	143	18,744
Sampgaon ...	424	120	19	10	6	1	...	4	139	1	140	119,843	282	23,913
Belgaum ...	968	120	2	55	28	80	1	33	122	81	203	128,477	193	15,041
Khanapur ...	633	190	25	33	5	24	1	15	215	25	240	79,264	125	11,308
Total ...	4656	834	60	263	106	236	4	108	894	239	1133	864,014	185	124,166

Aspect.

Belgaum,¹ running parallel to the Sahyádrí hills, with a very irregular outline, measures about a hundred miles from north to south and fifty to eighty miles from east to west. Kolhápúr on the north-west and North Kánara on the south-west separate it in a great degree from the Sahyádrí hills. But between these two districts a strip about twenty miles broad passes west to the crest of the Sahyádris. This western tract, and in a less degree the rest of the western fringe of the district, are rugged with forest or bush covered hills, and have a comparatively damp and cool climate. A line drawn through Nipáni, Sankeshvar, Páchápúr, Ankalgí, Marihalli and Yellurgad includes the fringe of the district which in character and climate belongs to the hill rather than to the plain country. Within these limits the rainfall is heavier and the vegetation more abundant, and the houses have pent roofs and wide eaves to carry the water clear of the mud walls. The rest of the district, sloping gently to the east, is broken by many ranges of low rolling hills, and by bold single peaks and granite rocks. It is divided from west to east into three belts of varied plain and upland by the courses of three rivers, the Krishna in the north, the Ghatprabha in the centre, and the Malprabha in the south. Most of the plain is of rich black soil, but towards the east it is stony and red and in the north there are in places long stretches of bare rock. In the north-east and centre the country is monotonous and uninteresting, low rolling downs and shallow valleys. In the richer parts are large stretches of black soil, and the higher grounds are almost bare of trees. In spite of numerous well grown trees in the valleys the country is deplorably bare. In the centre where later flows of trap form low-flat-headed hills that crown the water-sheds of the larger streams, the country grows less monotonous, and little further west are high bold hills, the remains of still later flows of trap. The west and south are fairly wooded, the plains with mangoes, tamarinds, and jacks; the hills with brushwood, scrub timber, and prickly-pear. The west is watered by the south-west monsoon. Further inland

¹ Chiefly from materials supplied by Messrs. G. McCorkell, C. S., W. H. Horsley, C. S., and J. L. Laird, District Forest Officer.

the south-west rains are light and uncertain. In the north and east want of rain often causes serious loss, and the east and south depend for their supply chiefly on the north-east monsoon.

For descriptive purposes the district may be divided into four parts: the western fringe and the tract of land that runs west to the Sahyádris, and the three belts of the eastern plain that, running east and west, are drained by the Malprabha in the south, by the Ghatprabha in the centre, and by the Krishna in the north. Of the tract that stretches west to the crest of the Sahyádris, the extreme west is a succession of valleys running between spurs that stretch east at right angles to the main range of the Sahyádris. In the hilly west and in other parts of the western fringe the rugged hills, the running streams, and the abundance of trees and brushwood make the country interesting and beautiful. The upper slopes and scarps which are of trap are much like the slopes and scarps near the Bor and Tal passes in Thána. But the scenery changes in the lower slopes where the older quartzites of the Kaládgi series are reached.¹ The tops and upper slopes of the hills are almost bare; the lower slopes and valleys are fairly wooded. The villages are far apart and small with five to fifty huts and a dozen to 200 people chiefly Maráthás, with some Telves and a sprinkling of Lingáyats. Besides the villages there are some Dhangar hamlets of grass-thatched huts, the floors slightly raised and cowdunged, the walls two or three feet high of wattled *kárví* or *Strobilanthus* sticks, coated with a wash of mud and cowdung. On the higher ground *rági* Eleusine corocana and *sáva* *Panicum miliare* are grown sometimes by ploughing and sometimes by coppice-burning. Every village has a little watered rice land on which every year two crops of red rice are grown. Of garden produce there are only plantains and limes. In the hot weather there is no water except low down in the valleys of the chief streamlets. In February when the trees are bare and the grass is bleached or burnt, a few *ráis* or sacred groves alone relieve the general bleakness and barrenness. The fresh leaves of May brighten the hills, but the blackened ground is not hidden till at the beginning of June the rains cover it with grass. Further east the valleys are flatter, broader, and more suited for tillage. Large swelling hills rise on all sides, but they are neither so high nor so steep as in the extreme west. Near Belgaum the smaller hills are rounded, and the larger more distant masses, which are capped by iron-clay, have true table-tops. The land is well-watered by deep cut streamlets, which draining into larger streams find their way north to the Ghatprabha. There is a plentiful rainfall from the south-west monsoon, and from the abundance of its evergreen brushwood the country at all times looks fresh and cool. The general features of the western fringe of the rest of the district resemble this tract rather than the open plain to the centre and east. The people grow rice instead of millet, wear coarse woollens instead of cotton, and, instead of in walled flat-roofed villages, live in villages of tiled houses surrounded by deep prickly-pear and *bábhul* fences.

Chapter I. Description.

Aspect.
Western Belt.

¹ Memoir Geological Survey of India, XII, Part I, 172.

Chapter I.**Description:****Aspect.****Southern Belt.**

Of the three belts into which the Malprabha in the south, the Ghatprabha in the centre, and the Krishna in the north divide the centre and east of the district, the valley of the Malprabha in the west is covered with hills and forests, some of the hills, especially to the north of Khánápur, being high, rugged, and of striking outline. On either side, as it draws near the Malprabha, the land is more open, and there is much level and arable ground, broken by gentle downs, and sometimes by sudden masses of granite. The banks of the river are fringed with trees and bushes, the south-west rainfall is abundant, and the chief crops are early rice, Indian millet, and sugarcane. There is not much garden tillage. There are many rich well-peopled villages of tiled houses surrounded by huge prickly-pear and *bábhul* tree hedges. Further east, in the extreme south the country is broken by ranges of low hills that run north and south and towards the east become gradually lower and less wooded. Here the early crops yield in importance to the cold weather crops and the north-east monsoon is perhaps the more important. Close to the Malprabha the country along both banks merges into a black or cotton soil plain with few trees, and, except during the south-west rains, with little vegetation or beauty, the barren sandy soil of the quartzites bearing but a scanty growth of forest trees. Only here and there the dullness of the view is broken by ridges of sandstone with sharp broken outlines. The prettiest spots in the country are where the rivers cut through the low ranges of hills. On the Malprabha Rámdurg, Torgal, Basargi, and a few miles to the south the bold rock of Parasgad repay a visit. The deep gorge known as Navil Tirth or the Peacock's Pool has much beauty; the bold wall-like quartz cliffs of Sogal, about ten miles west of Manoli, are adorned with lovely waterfalls and well-grown trees, and, if clothed with timber, the curious Kathárigad valley, about six miles north-west of Sogal, would be highly picturesque. In this part of the country the early and late crops are of about equal importance, but rice is not grown. The chief crops are Indian millet, cajan pea, wheat, gram, cotton, tobacco, and *kusumba* *Carthamus tinctorius*. There is not much garden land. The villages, which lie close together and at regular intervals, are generally walled and moderately large and rich with many *ráis* or groves of mango, jack, and tamarind.

Beyond the ridges which cross the black soil plain north-east and south-west, especially on the left bank of the Malprabha, is a low rolling plateau of sandstone hills very stony and barren. North of this, between Torgal and Karikol, is a rocky wilderness of poor sandy soil deep cut by streams and covered with scrubby brushwood.

Central Belt.

To the north the drainage area of the Malprabha is separated from the Ghatprabha valley by the Belgaum hills on the west and farther east by a succession of low rather bare sandstone ranges. North of this the Ghatprabha valley, beginning in the west among rugged forest-clad hills, changes eastwards near Dadi and Páchápur into a waving plain, broken by lines of low hills whose sides have a scanty covering of stunted teak. Further east the river passes

through a flat black-soil plain, which, towards the north, is suddenly broken by a tableland 300 to 400 feet above the neighbouring valley. Near Gokák, about the centre of the district, on both banks of the Ghatprabha, whose eastern course is tame and uninteresting, the plain is broken by ranges of low rather bare sandstone hills, through one of which the river forces its way in the famous Gokák falls. Close to the falls is the Márkándeya gorge also a spot of great beauty. East of Gokák on both sides of the river stretches a wide plain of rich black soil mixed in places with large patches of poor red. The rivers are fringed with *bábhul*, and along their banks are many garden plots and well-shaded villages. Away from the rivers the country except in the rains is bare and desolate.¹ The fields are treeless, the garden plots few, and the village sites miles apart and poorly shaded. Most of the villages are walled and fortified, and a few are fenced. The main harvest is early, chiefly early grown Indian millet; but especially in the east there is always a large area of late crop. The late crops are millet, Indian millet, cajan pea, gram, barley, and *kulthi*. A peculiarity of the Gokák trap hills, which are flat-topped and terraced, is that the sides are covered with trees and only the tops are tilled. Towards the west in Chikodi the soil is poor, but the south-west rain is more certain than in Gokák where much of the rain is from the north-east.

The water-parting between the Ghatprabha and the Krishna is marked in the west by some plateaus of poor soil 300 to 400 feet higher than the plain; further east it is marked by low rolling bare hills. For two or three miles on either side of the Krishna an open well-tilled black soil plain, dotted with many rich villages of flat-roofed houses and garden plots, stretches eastwards, gradually broadening as the western ranges break into single peaks. The banks of the Krishna are thickly clothed with *bábhul* trees. In this tract tillage is almost confined to the valleys of the different streams which run into the Krishna. There is little irrigation and in the west is an immense area of unarable stony ground. In the west the chief rain is from the south-west; further east the fall is less certain and depends more on the north-east monsoon.

North of the Krishna is a belt of deep rich soil with many small villages of thatched houses. Beyond this rich belt the country gradually rises in waving downs. The north-west is, except near villages, badly off for trees. The soil is poor and irrigation is confined to the valleys. In the west, where the soil is rich and the south-west rainfall fairly certain, there is much irrigation, and the barrenness of the plain is relieved by green patches of garden surrounding wells or fringing streams. The villages, which are fairly

Chapter I. Description.

Aspect.
Central Belt.

Northern Belt.

¹ In 1791, when during the third Maisur war (1790-92), Captain Little's detachment passed through the district on its way to and from Seringapatam, between Páchápúr about twelve miles south of Gokák and Negargi about fifteen miles south-east of Páchápúr, the country was covered by a thick forest called Manoli Bári, the road through which was rugged and stony. The forest lost itself in the south-west of Murgod. In some parts where the rivers took too great a sweep the forest was the boundary between the Marátha and Maisur territories. Moor's Narrative, 15.